

A Guide to Understanding and Implementing Quality Growth in Your Community

“New Discount Retailer Threatens Downtown Businesses”

“Road Widening to Remove Historic Buildings”

“Residents Protest Shopping Center Rezoning”

“Opponents Protest High-Density Project at Hearing”

Headlines like these are typical in many communities throughout Georgia. People are concerned about changes in their way of life — decline in the character of their neighborhoods, encroaching commercial development, increasing traffic, loss of trees, farmland or open space, and water quality or other environmental problems. But community change doesn't have to be traumatic. Communities can work out ways to guide change and development, making sure that new growth enriches the community and promotes a better quality of life for all residents. This manageable type of community change is called quality growth.

Quality growth, in many ways, means returning to the way we used to build our communities and neighborhoods: places where people could walk to school or the corner drugstore, pursue recreational activities at a nearby park, or just sit on the front porch and get to know their neighbors.

Quality growth can yield a number of benefits for your community:

- Residents will enjoy an improved quality of life, more affordable housing, cleaner water and air, more walkable neighborhoods, and reduced commuting times.
- Developers will experience reduced infrastructure and land costs and more predictability in the development approval process.
- Your local government will benefit from reduced service delivery costs, increased tax revenues, and enhanced economic development potential.

The Georgia Quality Growth Partnership has identified several general principles that define Quality Growth in a Georgia context. *(Also see illustration of typical features of a quality community on the next page, and the detailed listing of Quality Growth Principles on the back page.)*

What is Quality Growth?

Quality Growth Principles

Development Patterns

Traditional Neighborhoods: Traditional neighborhood development patterns should be encouraged, including use of more human scale development, compact development, mixing of uses within easy walking distance of one another, and facilitating pedestrian activity.

Infill Development: Communities should maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the conversion of undeveloped land at the urban periphery by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the downtown or traditional urban core of the community.

Sense of Place: Traditional downtown areas should be maintained as the focal point of the community or, for newer areas where this is not possible, the development of activity centers that serve as community focal points should be encouraged. These community focal points should be attractive, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly places where people choose to gather for shopping, dining, socializing, and entertainment.

Transportation Alternatives: Alternatives to transportation by automobile, including mass transit, bicycle routes, and pedestrian facilities, should be made available in each community. Greater use of alternate transportation should be encouraged.

Regional Identity: Each region should promote and preserve a regional identity, or regional sense of place, defined in terms of traditional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics.

Resource Conservation

Heritage Preservation: The traditional character of the community should be maintained through preserving and revitalizing historic areas of the community, encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community, and protecting other scenic or natural features that are important to defining the community's character.

Open Space Preservation: New development should be designed to minimize the amount of land consumed, and open space should be set aside from development for use as public parks or as greenbelts/wildlife corridors. Compact development ordinances are one way of encouraging this type of open space preservation.

Environmental Protection: Environmentally sensitive areas should be protected from negative impacts of development. Whenever possible, the natural terrain, drainage, and vegetation of an area should be preserved.

Social and Economic Development

Growth Preparedness: Each community should identify and put in place the pre-requisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These might include infrastructure (roads, water, sewer) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances and regulations to manage growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities and managing new growth when it occurs.

Appropriate Businesses: The businesses and industries encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, long-term sustainability, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the resources of the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher-skill job opportunities.

Employment Options: A range of job types should be provided in each community to meet the diverse needs of the local workforce.

Housing Choices: A range of housing size, cost, and density should be provided in each community to make it possible for all who work in the community to also live in the community (thereby reducing commuting distances), to promote a mixture of income and age groups in each community, and to provide a range of housing choice to meet market needs.

Educational Opportunities: Educational and training opportunities should be readily available in each community — to permit community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, or to pursue entrepreneurial ambitions.

Regional Cooperation: Regional cooperation should be encouraged in setting priorities, identifying shared needs, and finding collaborative solutions, particularly where it is critical to success of a venture, such as protection of shared natural resources or development of a transportation network.

Each community may apply these quality growth principles to meet their particular needs and conditions. *Open Space Preservation*, for example, is undoubtedly a good idea, but for your community, what kind of open space, how much, and in what locations should open space be preserved?

For help pursuing quality growth in your community, visit the Georgia Quality Growth Partnership website at www.georgiaqualitygrowth.com or refer to the Quality Growth Assistance Menu at the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' website at www.dca.state.ga.us. The menu is also available by calling 404-679-4940 and asking for the Office of Growth Management.

New industry or other major employers are located close in to town, making jobs accessible to all residents by way of transit, walking, or bicycling.

New subdivisions match the mix of housing types and styles of the older, closer-in neighborhoods of the community. Street layouts also match those in older parts of the community and connect to the existing street network at many points. The cul-de-sac subdivisions typical of most suburban areas are discouraged.

Traffic calming measures are employed along major roadways to slow traffic speeds and thereby create a pedestrian-friendly environment. These measures include narrowed street widths, on-street parking, or raised pedestrian crossings.

The community is relatively compact, with new development matching the typical densities of the older center of the community. The typical historic sections of Georgia towns have average lot sizes of around one-quarter acre.

Environmentally sensitive areas of the community (such as stream banks, floodplains, or steep hillsides) are set aside from development and used as parks or passive recreation areas to be enjoyed by all community residents.

The community has a clear boundary, where town stops and countryside begins. Unattractive rural sprawl along roadways has been avoided by concentrating any housing and commercial buildings in small, well-planned villages, leaving lots of intervening farmland or open space.

An attractive town center serves adjacent neighborhoods. This area is very pedestrian friendly, and includes pleasant community gathering spaces. Residences located over shops brings round-the-clock activity to the area.

Schools and their playgrounds/ballparks are located within the neighborhoods, making it possible for children to walk to school. This also permits neighborhood residents to make use of school facilities (meeting rooms, playground or ballparks) when school is not in session.

An older strip commercial area is being fixed up to match the traditional development patterns of the community. Sidewalks are being added, street trees planted, excessive signs and billboards are being removed, and new buildings are being built near the street front to hide large parking areas.

Sidewalks and bike trails are provided throughout the community to encourage walking and bicycling as an alternative to driving to most destinations.

All commercial structures, such as shopping, warehouses, or offices, are located near the street front, with parking provided in the rear of these buildings. This makes the community more attractive (no visible expanses of parking lots) and creates a friendlier environment for pedestrians.

Street trees are planted throughout the community to enhance appearances and provide shade for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Higher intensity uses, such as retail shops, offices, or apartments, are concentrated along major roadways, making it feasible to provide limited public transit along these routes.

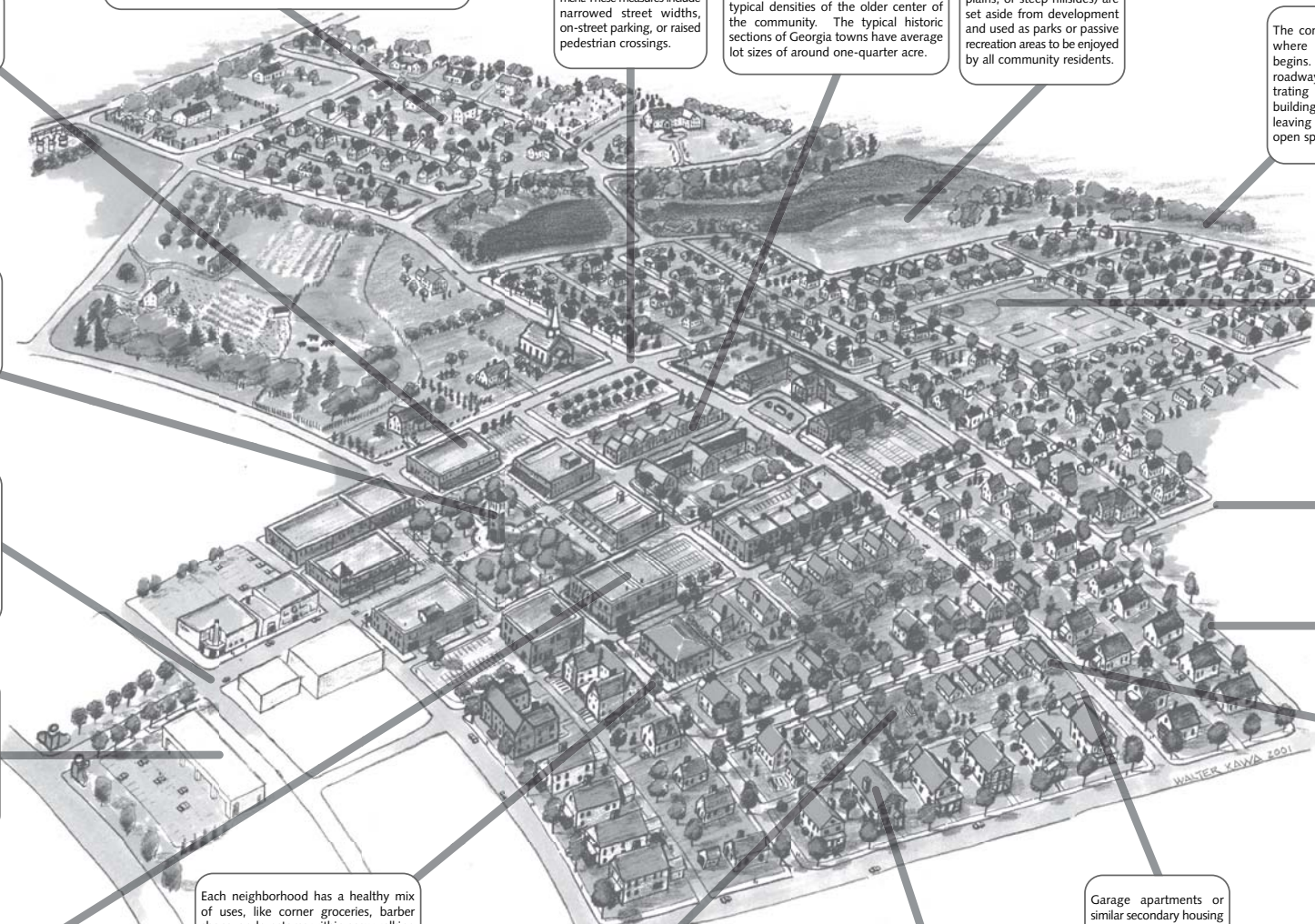
Each neighborhood has a healthy mix of uses, like corner groceries, barber shops, or drugstores within easy walking distance of residences.

Vacant sites near the center of the community are used for new development that matches the character of the surrounding neighborhood. This infill development reduces the need for as much new development on the edges of the community.

Houses throughout the community are located near the street, with large front porches that encourage interaction with neighbors. Garages are located to the rear of each property, (accessible via alleyways) or on-street parking is used for residents' automobiles.

Garage apartments or similar secondary housing units are encouraged as a means to bring affordable housing into all neighborhoods of the community.

Mix of housing sizes and types in each neighborhood, to provide opportunities for people of different incomes to live near where they work or go to school.



For more information about any of the ideas represented on this drawing, please visit the Georgia Quality Growth Partnership website at www.georgiaqualitygrowth.com